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ABSTRACT

A study examined media use patterns among a large, nationally representative sample of children ages 2-18, and which explored how children choose and interact with the whole array of media available to them, including television, movies, computers, music, video games, radio, magazines, books, and newspapers. The goal was to provide a solid base from which to examine media's effects on children and develop strategies for proactively using media to communicate with America's youth. Several key findings emerged: children spend the equivalent of a work week using media; kids grow up surrounded by media, even very young children; many parents seem not to exercise much oversight of their children's media use; young people's media use hits its zenith just as children are making the transition to their teenage years; despite widespread access, children spend a relatively small amount of time each day using computers; traditional media--especially TV--continue to dominate children's media use; most kids still read for fun; kids use new media to supplement rather than replace other forms of media; most kids say they prefer computers to TV; children who spend the most time with media are the least contented; children in lower socio-economic communities spend more time with media than do other children, but use computers significantly less; Black and Hispanic children have significantly less access to computers than do White children, but still spend as much time on computers as White kids; girls listen to more music and boys, who spend more time with computers than girls do, watch more TV and play more violent video games; rural and urban kids use much the same kind of media; and kids in single-parent homes watch more TV than those in two-parent homes. Contains 12 footnotes and 19 figures of data. (NKA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Kaiser Family Foundation Report

November 1999

kids & media

the new millennium

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A Comprehensive National Analysis of Children's Media Use

THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is an independent national health care philanthropy and not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. This study was conducted as part of the Foundation's Program on the Entertainment Media and Public Health, which was established to examine the impact of entertainment media in society, and to work with entertainment industry leaders to help them convey important health messages to the public.

The study was designed by Kaiser Family Foundation staff in consultation with Stanford University Professor Donald F. Roberts and Harris Interactive, Inc. (formerly Louis Harris & Associates), including Humphrey Taylor, Katherine Binns, Dana Markow and Michele Salomon. Harris Interactive collected all data. The results were analyzed and this report was prepared by Foundation staff and Professor Roberts. Special thanks to Cathryn Borum, Kaiser Family Foundation, who provided vital assistance in the preparation of this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Kaiser Family Foundation Report

November 1999

kids media @ the new millennium

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A Comprehensive National Analysis of Children's Media Use

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Introduction

CONCERN OVER THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN CHILDREN'S LIVES has never been higher: hardly a week goes by without a public debate about violent video games, educational TV, depressed computer-users, gender stereotypes in rap music, the technology gap between rich and poor, or the online dangers lurking just behind the computer screen. And never has there been such a push to use media proactively to reach young people with information or positive messages.

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THEN & NOW:

Percent of homes with more than one TV set in 1970: 35% [1]

Percent of homes with more than one TV set in 1999: 88%

At the same time, the "media environment" for kids of all ages has changed radically in recent years. While one generation of Americans experienced a childhood in which they shared a single black and white, three-channel TV with their parents, the next is growing up with a Walkman glued to their ears, 100 channels in the bedroom, and a World Wide Web of information at their fingertips. One generation may have flinched at gunshots in a western; the next generation plays video games with violence so vivid it leaves them ducking to avoid being splattered.

Despite the widespread debate over kids and media, and despite the dramatic changes in children's media environments, no publicly available study has yet examined the full pattern of media use among American youth. The majority of studies tend to focus on just a few media (e.g., television, or music, or computers) or to use small, non-representative samples of respondents (e.g., adolescent girls, or preschoolers, or 12th graders in the Northeast). This study examines media use patterns among a large, nationally representative sample of children ages 2–18, and it explores how children choose and interact with the whole array of media available to them, including television, movies, computers, music, video games, radio, magazines, books and newspapers. The goal of the study is to provide a more solid base from which to examine media's effects on children and develop strategies for proactively using media to communicate with America's youth.

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AMERICAN CHILDREN SPEND THE EQUIVALENT OF A FULL-TIME WORK WEEK USING MEDIA.

THE AVERAGE CHILD SPENDS ABOUT FIVE AND A HALF HOURS a day using media (5:29) — more than 38 hours a week. This figure includes electronic media (TV, videos, movies, music, computers and video games), as well as books, magazines and newspapers. It does not include any media used in school or for homework.

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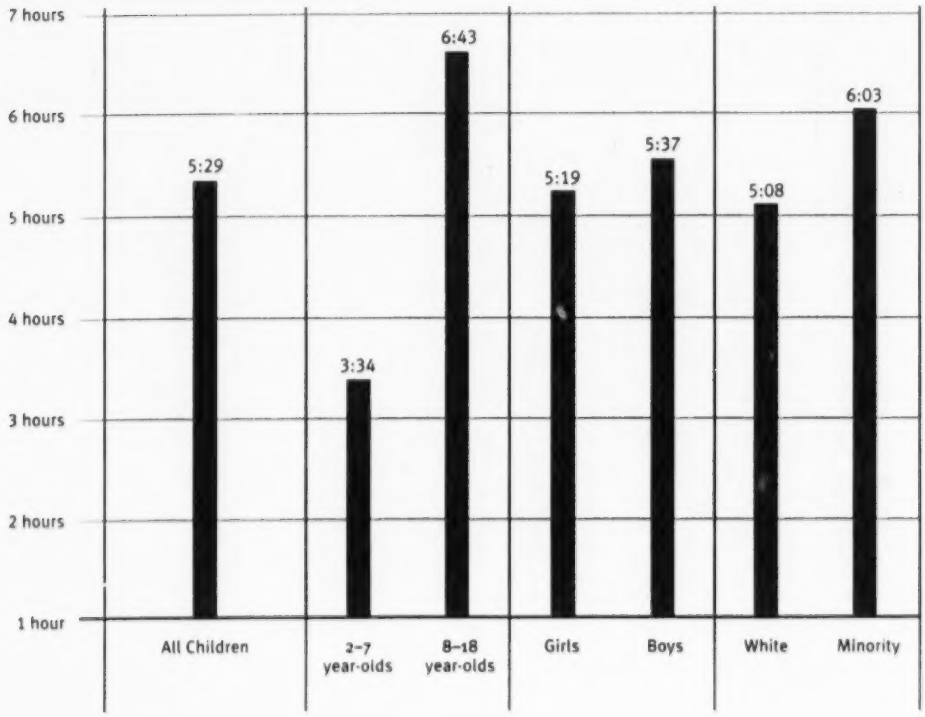
Media Use

On a typical day, the total amount of time spent using media by...



*Times are presented in **hours : minutes***

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

OLDER KIDS — THOSE 8 YEARS OLD OR OLDER — SPEND AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT SIX AND THREE-QUARTER HOURS A DAY (6:43) USING MEDIA. ONLY 5% OF KIDS SPEND AN HOUR A DAY OR LESS WITH MEDIA.

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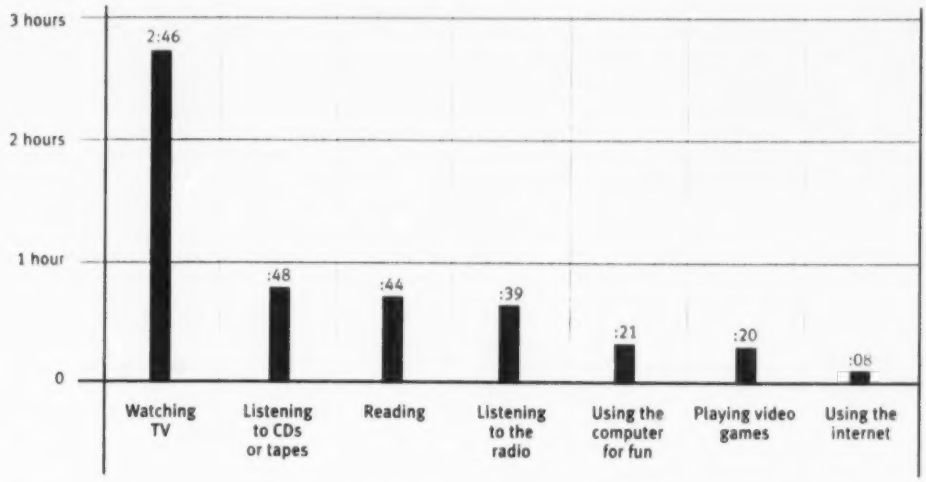
Media Use

In a typical day, the average amount of time children spend...



*Times are presented in **hours : minutes.** Numbers cannot be summed to calculate children's total media use time because they may have used more than one medium at a time.*

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

MOST CHILDREN SPEND AT LEAST PART OF THEIR DAY USING MORE THAN ONE MEDIA AT A TIME, FOR EXAMPLE, READING A MAGAZINE WHILE WATCHING TV OR LISTENING TO THE RADIO. The chart above shows the average amount of time spent with each medium, but can't be summed due to this multiple media use.

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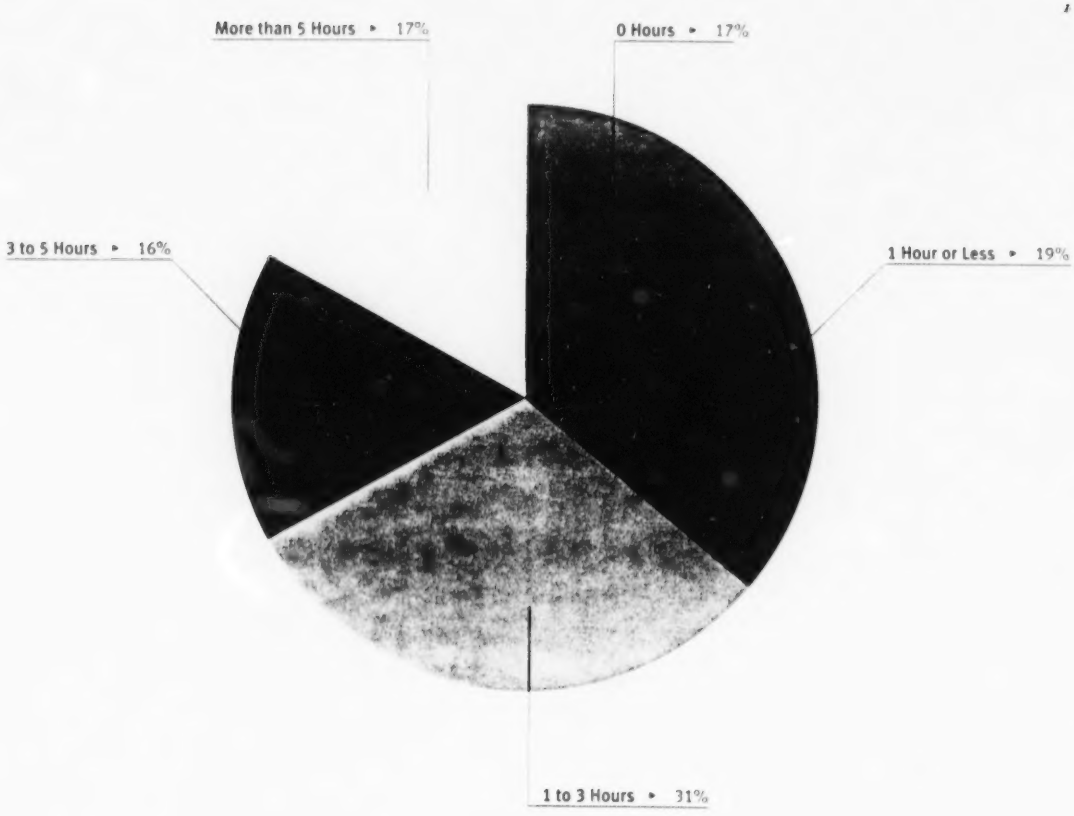
Daily TV Viewing

On a typical day, the percent of children who watch TV for...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

MORE THAN ONE OUT OF EVERY SIX KIDS IN THIS COUNTRY (17%) WATCHES MORE THAN FIVE HOURS OF TV A DAY.

Kids AND Media

AT THE NEW MILLENNIUM

KIDS TODAY GROW UP LITERALLY SURROUNDED BY MEDIA.

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN CHILD GROWS UP IN A HOME WITH: three TVs, three tape players, three radios, two VCRs, two CD players, one video game player, and one computer.

Many young people live in homes in which the TV is a constant companion; left on for much of the day, with no guidelines limiting its use. The TV is on "most of the time" in 42% of children's homes, and is usually on during meals in 58% of children's homes. Among kids 8 and older, two-thirds (65%) say the TV is usually on during meals in their home.

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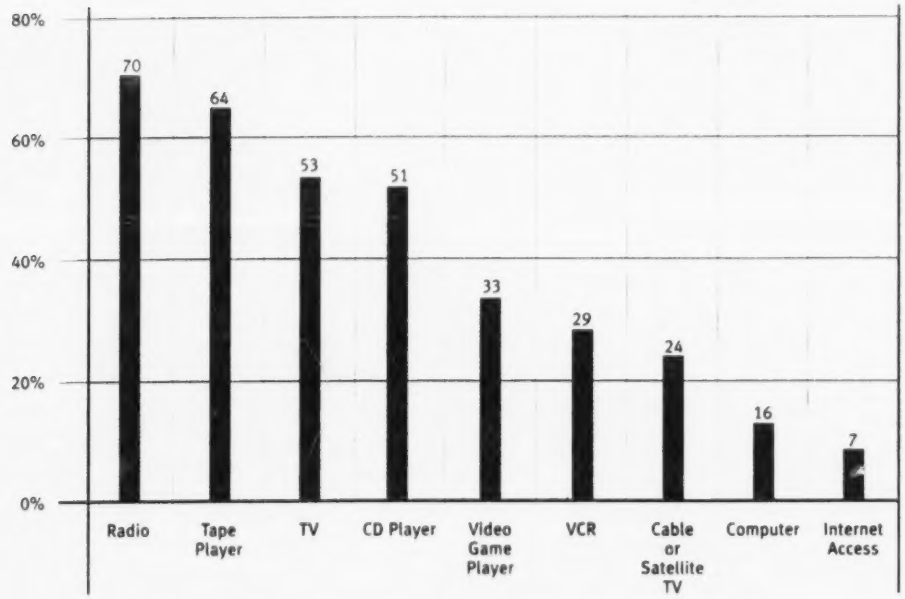
Media in the Bedroom

Percent of children who have the following media in their bedroom...



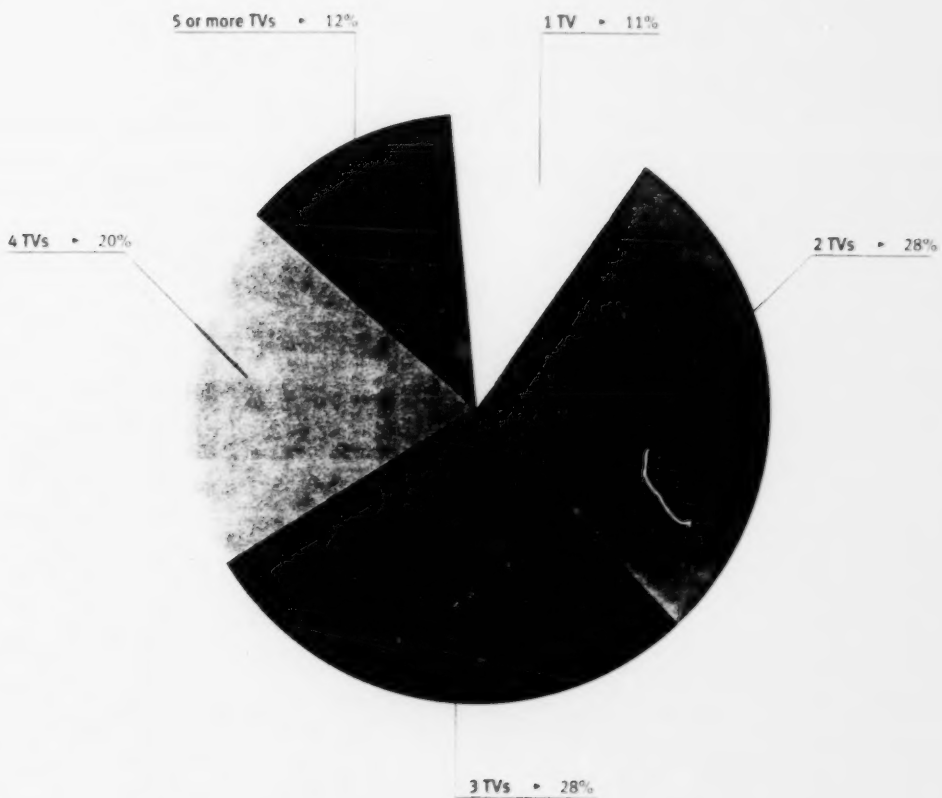
Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS ARE RAPIDLY BECOMING 'MEDIA CENTRAL,' OFFERING MOST KIDS THE CHANCE TO CONSUME MANY KINDS OF MEDIA IN THE PRIVACY OF THEIR OWN ROOMS. More than half of all children have a radio (70%), tape player (64%), TV (53%), or CD player (51%) in their bedroom; a third (33%) have a video game player in their bedroom, and almost a third (29%) have a VCR there. More than one in seven (16%) has a computer in their bedroom.

Among older kids, the proportion with TVs or computers in their rooms is even higher. Two-thirds of children 8 and older (65%) have a TV in their bedroom and about one out of five (21%) has a computer there.

TVs in the Home

Percent of children who live in homes with...



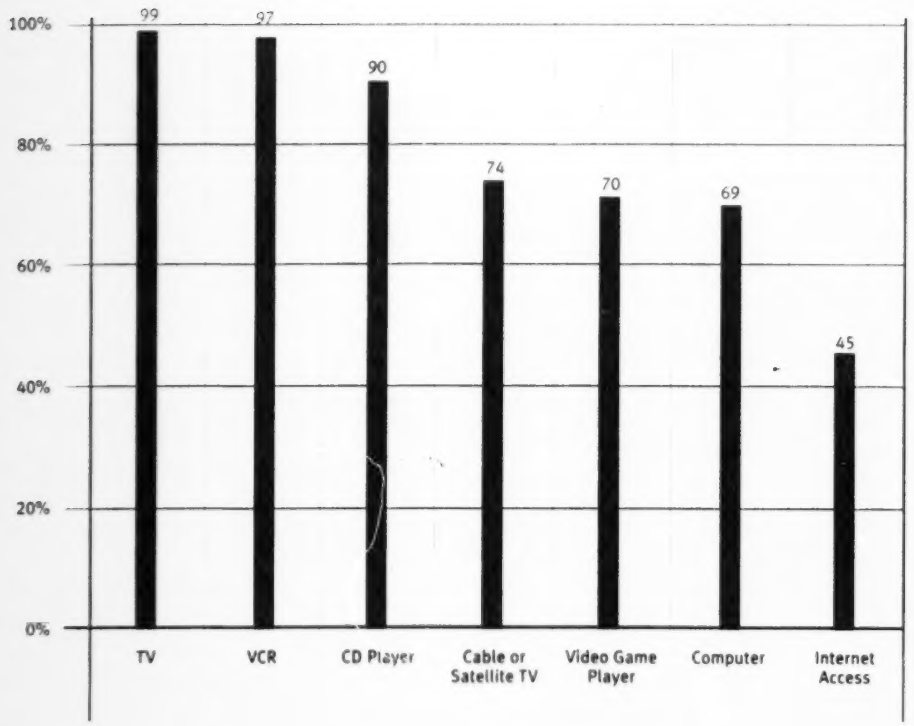
"No answer" responses not shown.

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

NEARLY A THIRD (32%) OF KIDS LIVE IN HOMES WITH FOUR OR MORE TVS. About as many children live in homes with five or more TVs (12%) as live in homes with only one TV (11%).

Media in the Home

Percent of children who live in homes with...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

THE COMPUTER HAS RAPIDLY BECOME A STANDARD FEATURE IN MOST CHILDREN'S HOMES. Nearly seven out of every ten (69%) children have a computer in the home, and nearly half (45%) have Internet access.

Kids AND Media

2

EVEN THE VERY YOUNGEST CHILDREN ARE WIDELY EXPOSED TO MEDIA.

ACCORDING TO PARENTS, 2 7 YEAR-OLDS SPEND AN AVERAGE

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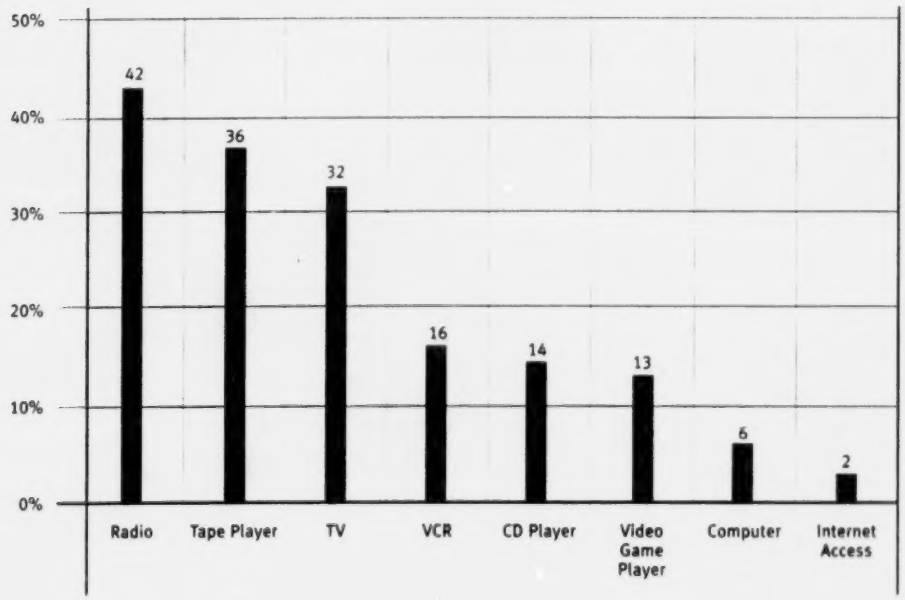
Media in the Bedroom

Percent of **2–7 year-olds** who have the following media in their bedroom...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

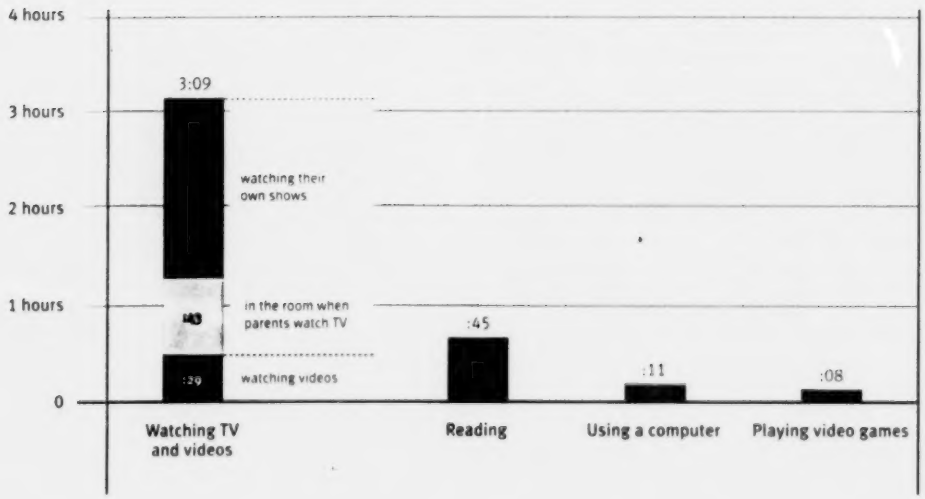
MANY PRESCHOOLERS HAVE THEIR OWN TV OR VCR IN THEIR BEDROOM. A third (32%) of 2–7 year-olds have a TV in their bedroom.[2] A fair number of this 7-and-under crowd have additional media in their rooms: more than one in ten has a VCR (16%) or a video game player (13%) in their bedroom.

The majority of 2–7 year-olds have a computer in their home. More than six out of ten (62%) kids under 8 have a computer at home, and 40% have Internet access.

On an average day, 16% of 2–7 year-olds play video games and 26% use computers. Kids in this age group who play video games spend a fair amount of time at the controls—an average of 50 minutes a day. Those who use computers spend about 40 minutes a day at the keyboard.

Media Use

On a typical day, the amount of time **2–7 year-olds** spend...



*Times are presented in **hours : minutes**. Numbers cannot be summed to calculate children's total media use time because they may have used more than one medium at a time. Reading includes amount of time children are read to.*

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

PARENTS REPORT THAT THEIR KIDS IN THIS AGE GROUP SPEND AN AVERAGE OF MORE THAN THREE HOURS (3:09) IN FRONT OF THE TV EACH DAY, including about two hours (1:59) watching their own shows, three-quarters of an hour (:43) in the same room with a parent while he or she is watching TV, and half an hour (:29) watching videos, either of movies or of previously taped TV shows.[1]

More than a third of parents (35%) of 2–7 year-olds report that the TV is on "most of the time" in their home; and almost half (47%) say the TV is usually on during meals.

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Kids AND Media

MANY PARENTS DO NOT APPEAR TO EXERCISE MUCH OVERSIGHT OF THEIR CHILDREN'S MEDIA USE.

MANY CHILDREN ARE GROWING UP IN HOMES WHERE THE TV

About half (49) of all kids don't have any rules about how much or what kind of TV they can watch. Among kids 8 and older, 61 say there aren't any rules about TV watching in their homes.

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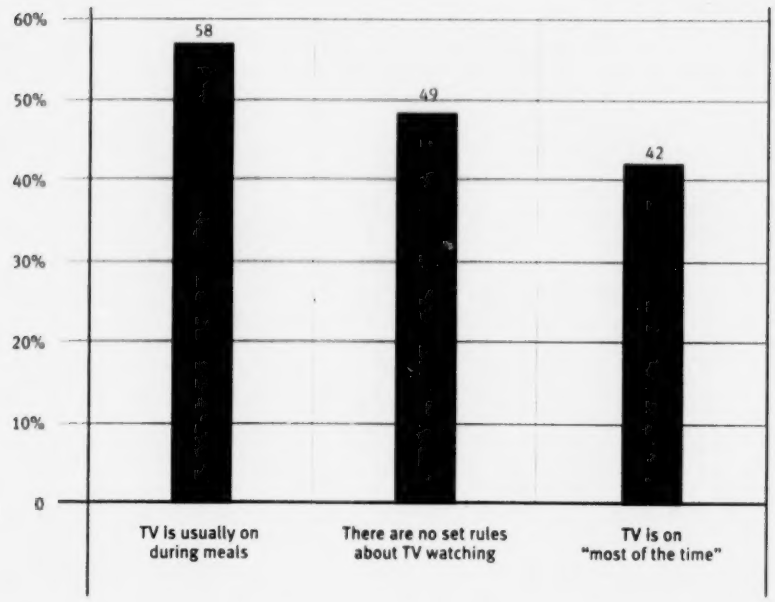
Media Use in the Home

Percent of children who live in homes where...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

PARENTS DO NOT WATCH MUCH TV WITH THEIR KIDS. According to the diaries kids kept of their media use, those over 7 **almost never watch TV with their parents** (95% of the time they are not with their parents); according to parents who filled out diaries about their younger kids (2–7 year-olds), 81% of the time these youngsters are watching TV, their parents are doing something else.

PREDICTORS OF HIGH MEDIA USE THAT PARENTS CAN CONTROL:

(BASED ON 8–18 YEAR-OLDS)

Our analysis found that certain demographic variables such as race, age and family composition are significantly related to high media use. However, other media-related environmental conditions that can be altered also act as consistent predictors of media use, even after accounting for these demographic factors.

Media use is higher among children who have access to a lot of media in their bedroom (computer, video game players, and cable are especially strong predictors), live in homes where the TV is frequently on "even when no one is watching," or spend more than half of their TV time watching alone.

Parents who want to help limit their children's media use should:

- Limit the number of media a child has access to in the bedroom. Specifically, the presence of a computer, a video game player or cable TV in the bedroom are among the strongest predictors of higher media use that a parent can control.

- Limit the amount of time that the television is on in the home, even if it's just on as background noise.

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Kids AND Media

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEDIA USE HITS ITS ZENITH JUST AS CHILDREN ARE MAKING THE TRANSITION TO THEIR TEENAGE YEARS.

CHILDREN AGES 8–13 SPEND MORE TIME WITH MEDIA THAN KIDS

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THEN & NOW:

Percent of sixth graders who had a TV in their bedroom in 1970: 6%

Percent of sixth graders who have a TV in their bedroom in 1999: 77%

Tweens spend the most time of any age group watching TV, watching videos of TV shows, and playing video and computer games, and they are most likely to have gone to a movie the previous day. They spend about the same amount of time each day as older kids watching movies on video, using computers for fun, and going online. By contrast, they spend much less time than older kids listening to the radio, CDs or tapes.

TV is still the medium of choice for this age group. More than one in four (27%) tweens spends more than five hours a day watching TV. By contrast, a much smaller proportion spends more than a single hour playing video games (13%), going online (5%) or playing computer games (3%).

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Kids AND Media

DESPITE WIDESPREAD ACCESS, CHILDREN SPEND A RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNT OF TIME EACH DAY USING COMPUTERS.

ON A TYPICAL DAY, 42% OF ALL CHILDREN AGES 2–18 WILL USE

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THEN & NOW:

Percent of homes with 3 or more TV sets in 1970: 6% [3]

Percent of homes with 3 or more TV sets in 1999: 60%

But while the vast majority of kids have access to computers, on the whole most kids spend very little time using them.

Among all children ages 2–18, kids spend an average of about a half an hour a day using computers (:34), including time spent on computers in school. They spend an average of 21 minutes a day using computers for fun. By contrast, kids average two and three-quarter hours a day watching TV.

Fewer than one in ten kids (9%) spends more than an hour a day using computers for fun, and only 3% spend more than an hour a day online.

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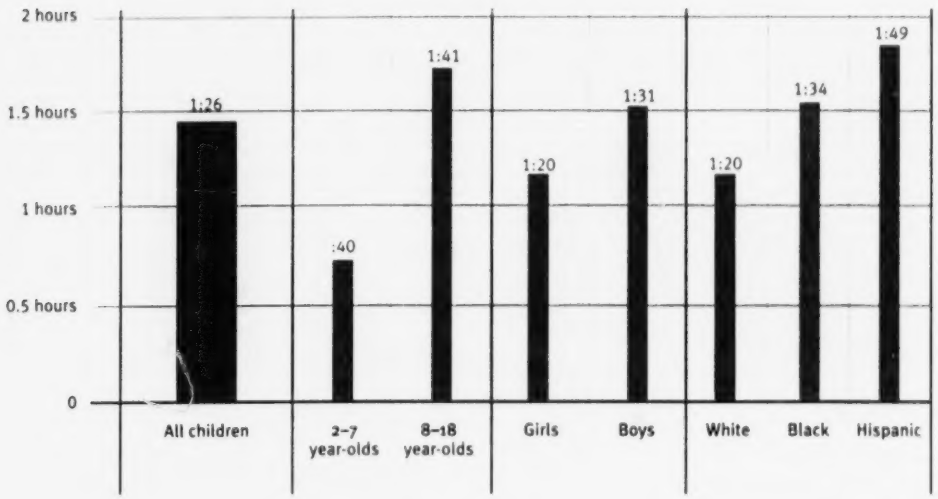
Computer Use

Among children who use a computer, the average amount of time spent at the keyboard per day by...



*Times are presented in **hours : minutes***

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

EVEN THOSE CHILDREN WHO USE COMPUTERS SPEND SUBSTANTIALLY LESS TIME AT THE KEYBOARD THAN THEY DO WATCHING TV.

The limited time kids spend with computers, on average, is clearly due in part to the fact that more than half of all kids don't use a computer at all on a typical day (58% of all 2–18 year-olds).

Looking just at those children who use computers on a given day, 2–7 year-olds spend an average of 40 minutes a day at the keyboard, while kids 8 and older who use computers spend an average of more than an hour and a half (1:41) each day.

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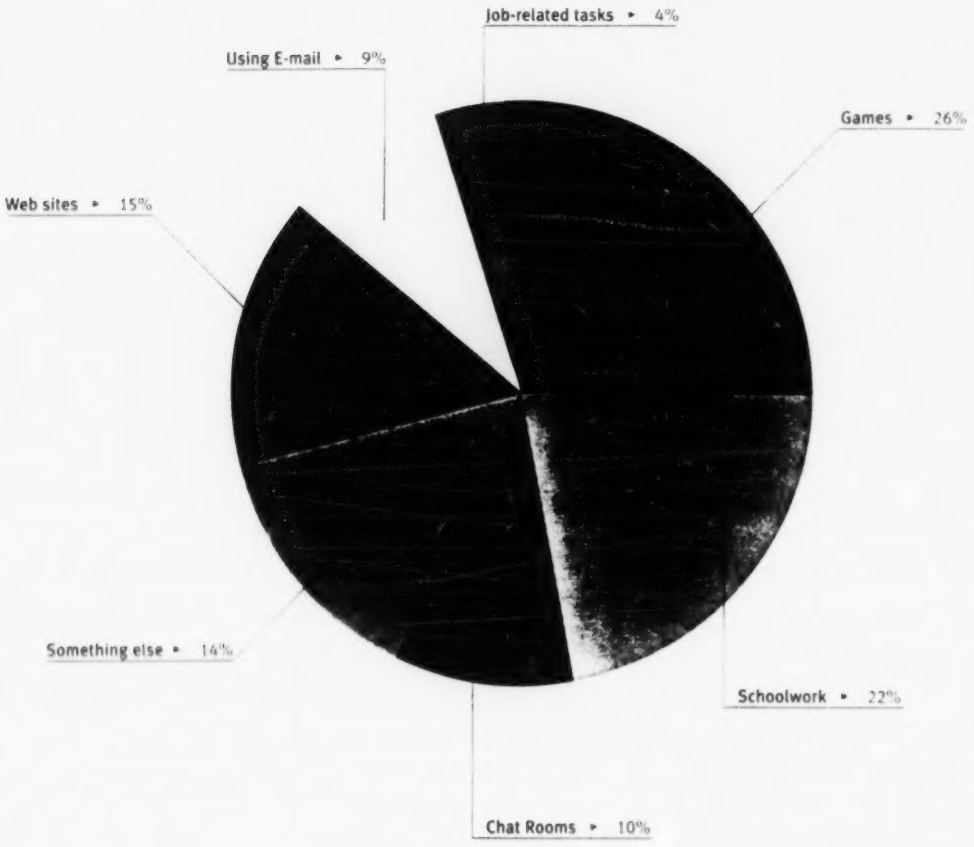
Computer Use

Of children who use a computer on a typical day,
the proportion of time spent on...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

THOSE KIDS 8 AND OLDER WHO USE COMPUTERS SPEND ABOUT A QUARTER OF THEIR TIME (26%) PLAYING GAMES, almost a quarter (22%) doing school work, and about a third of their time on the Internet, either chatting (10%), surfing the Web (15%), or sending e-mail (9%).

Kids AND Media

TRADITIONAL MEDIA — ESPECIALLY TV — CONTINUE TO DOMINATE CHILDREN'S MEDIA USE TIME.

DESPITE ALL THE NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE TO KIDS,

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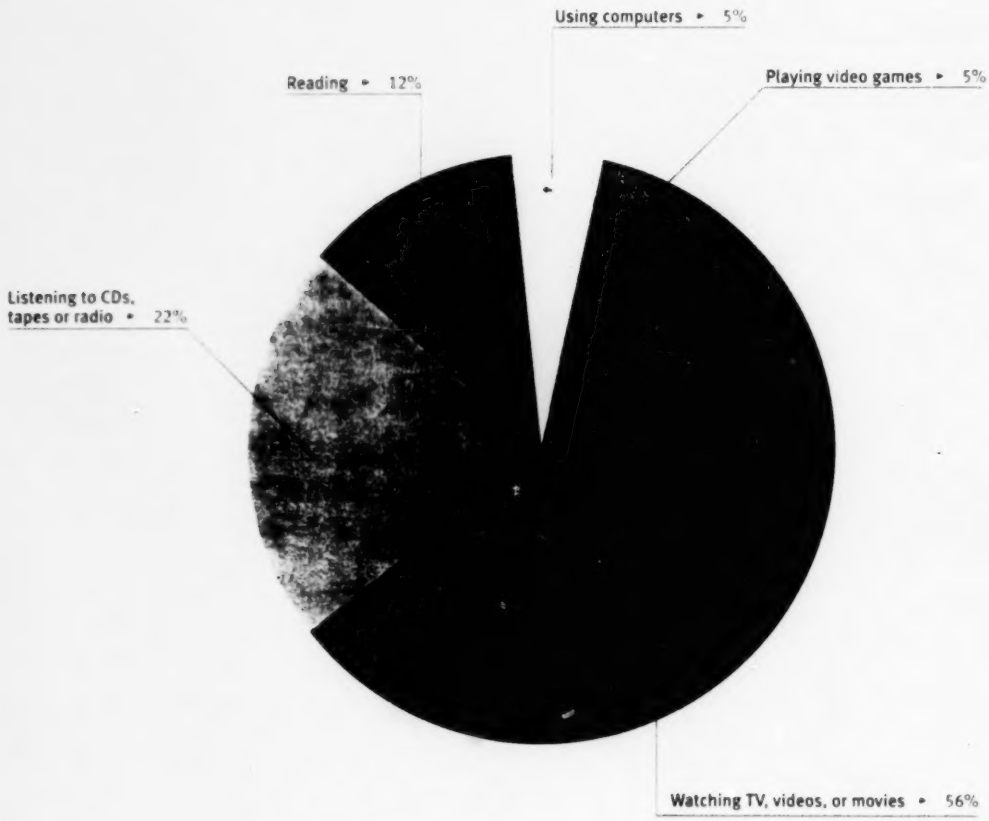
Media Use

Of all time with media, the proportion children spend...

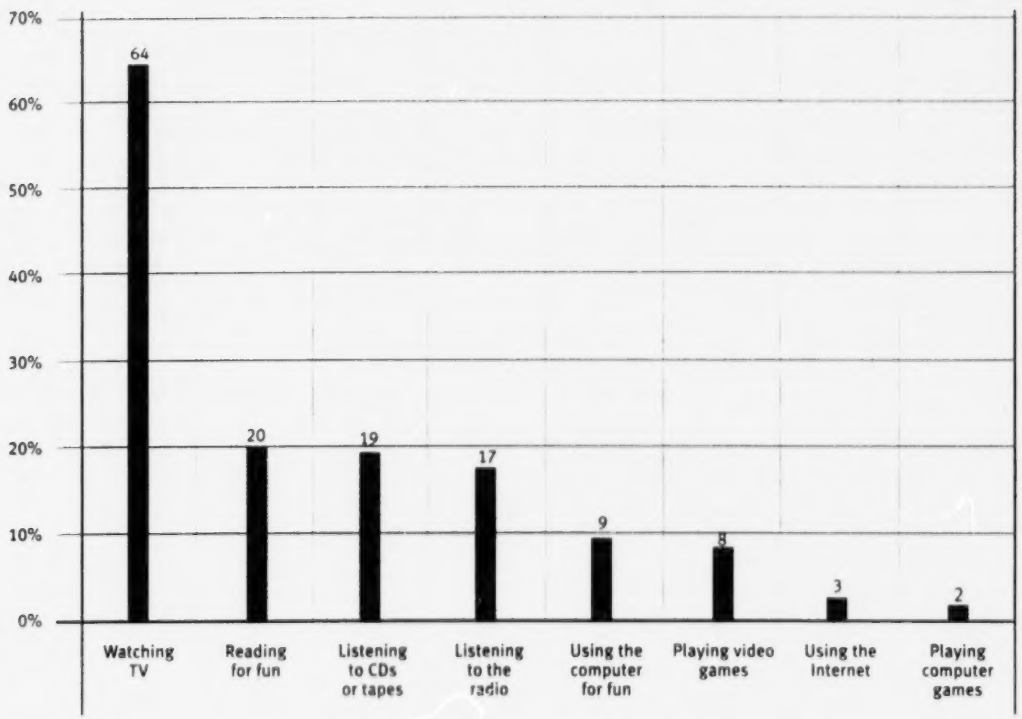


Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

OF ALL THE TIME THE AVERAGE KID SPENDS WITH MEDIA, more than half (56%) is spent watching TV, videos or movies, nearly a quarter (22%) is spent listening to music on CDs or the radio, 12% is spent reading, and 5% each is spent with computers and video games.

Media Use

Percent of children who spend more than one hour per day...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

WHEN VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO SPEND MORE THAN AN HOUR A DAY USING A PARTICULAR KIND OF MEDIA, TRADITIONAL MEDIA ALSO DOMINATE.

About two-thirds (64%) of all kids spend more than an hour a day watching TV, and about one out of six (17%) spends **more than five hours a day watching TV.**

By contrast, **fewer than one out of ten (9%) kids spends more than an hour a day using a computer for fun,** including 3% who spend more than an hour online and 2% who spend more than an hour playing computer games. Eight percent spend more than an hour a day playing video games.

MOST KIDS STILL READ FOR FUN.

AS TELEVISION HAS CEMENTED ITS PRESENCE IN YOUNG

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IN A TYPICAL WEEK:

Kids spend an average of more than **nineteen hours** watching TV (19:19), more than **ten hours** listening to music (10:04), more than **five hours** reading for pleasure (5:15), **about two and a half hours** using computers for fun (2:20), and more than **two hours** playing video games (2:17).[6]

In a typical day, about eight out of ten children (82%) will read or be read to, excluding time spent reading in school or doing homework. Kids spend an average of nearly three-quarters of an hour a day (:44) reading for pleasure.[7] Most experts recommend that kids read or be read to for a minimum of 20–30 minutes a day, a standard that kids are meeting, on average.

In comparison to most electronic media, however, reading certainly lags far behind: kids spend more than five times as much time in front of a TV or computer screen as they do reading (an average of more than four hours a day (4:06) watching TV or videos, playing video games, or using a computer for fun).

Of all the print media, kids spend the most time each day with books — an average of 25 minutes a day, followed by 16 minutes a day reading magazines and an average of five minutes a day reading a newspaper. In a typical day, 57% of kids will read a book for fun, 51% will read a magazine, and 31% will read a newspaper.

The amount of time young people spend reading for fun drops off precipitously once they hit the teenage years — especially the amount of time spent reading books. "Tweens" in the 8–13 year old age group spend an average of 50 minutes a day reading for fun, including 28 minutes reading books; by contrast, teens in the 14–18 year age range spend an average of 37 minutes a day reading, including just 14 minutes with books. In a typical day, 59% of tweens spend some time reading a book for pleasure; only 30% of teens do the same.

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KIDS USE NEW MEDIA TO SUPPLEMENT RATHER THAN REPLACE OTHER FORMS OF MEDIA.

KIDS WHO SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH ONE KIND OF MEDIA

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ON A TYPICAL DAY:

Two percent of all kids will use the Internet to visit research or information sites.

Eight percent of all kids will visit a Web site about a TV show, movie or musical group.

Children who watch a lot of TV tend to read slightly more than other kids. On average, "high" TV users read for about eight minutes more a day than "low" TV users.[8]

Children who spend more time using computers than other kids also tend to spend more time watching TV and reading. Children who use a computer for enjoyment for more than an hour a day watch about one hour and 40 minutes more TV a day and read about 22 minutes more a day than children who don't use computers at all. These "high" computer users are also twice as likely as kids who don't use computers at all to watch TV for more than five hours a day (35% v. 15%), and to read for more than an hour a day (34% v. 17%).

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Kids AND Media

IN A POSSIBLE INDICATION OF THINGS TO COME, MOST KIDS SAY THEY PREFER COMPUTERS TO TV, IF THEY'RE FORCED TO CHOOSE.

WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, CHILDREN 8 AND OLDER SAY THEY

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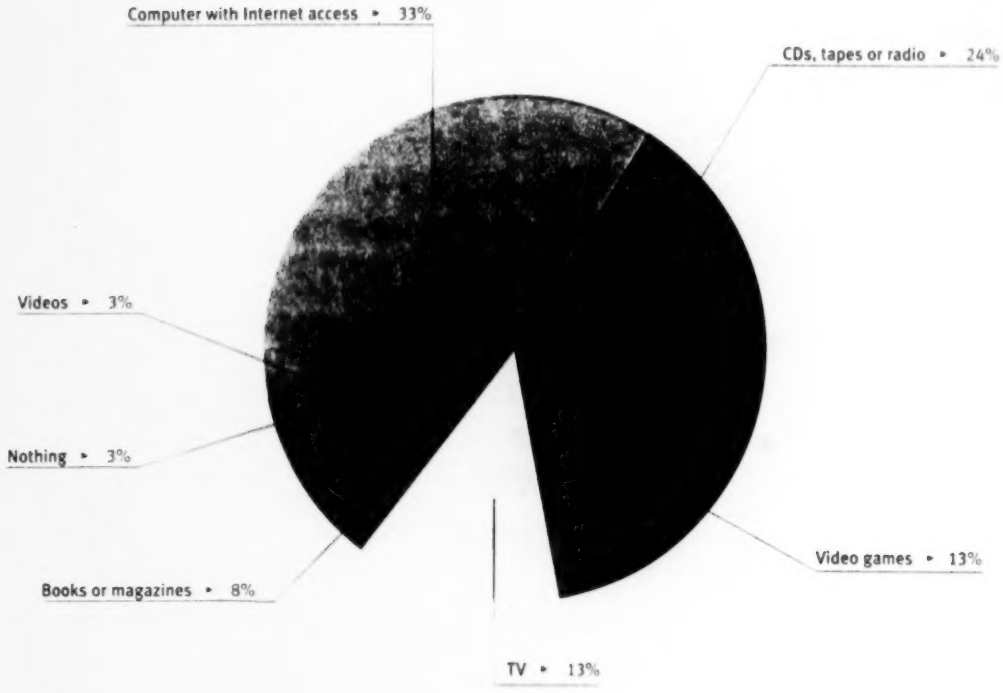
Favorite Media

When asked to choose which medium to bring to a desert island, the percent of children aged 8–18 who picked...



"No answer" responses not shown.

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

KIDS 8 AND OLDER ARE NEARLY THREE TIMES AS LIKELY TO CHOOSE COMPUTERS OVER TV if forced to pick one form of media to have with them on a desert island (33% pick computers, 13% pick TV). Of course, a computer with Internet access could theoretically offer someone on a desert island a range of news, entertainment content and interpersonal communication that no other media can compete with; but the fact that so many young people selected computers and so few chose television is nonetheless illuminating.

Among 2–7 year-olds, 29% say TV is their favorite, while 23% pick computers and 23% pick video games as their favorite medium.[1]

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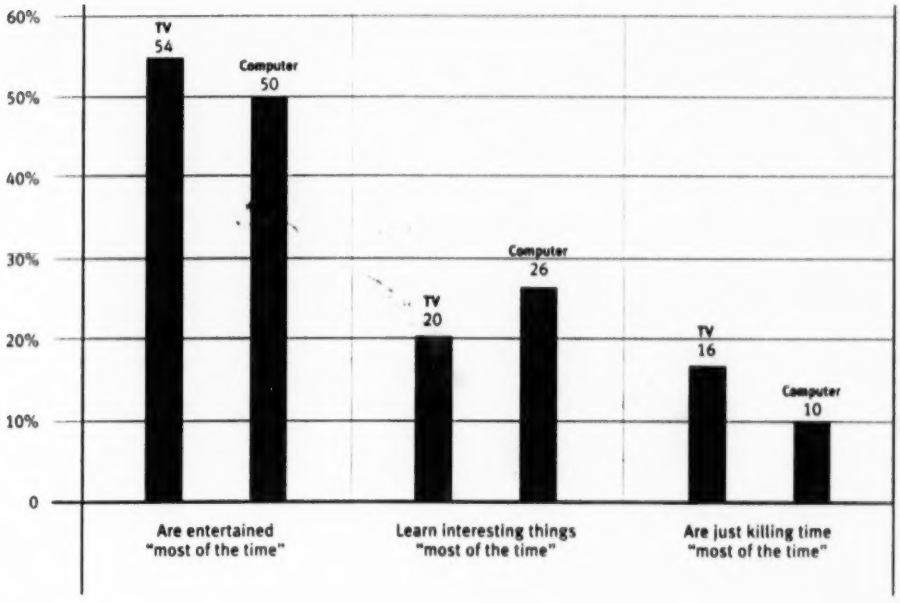
Attitudes Toward Media

When asked how they feel when they use computers or watch TV, the percent of children aged 8–18 who say they...



Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

MOST CHILDREN DON'T MAKE A BIG DISTINCTION BETWEEN TVs AND COMPUTERS IN TERMS OF THEIR ENTERTAINMENT OR EDUCATIONAL VALUE.

Similar proportions of children say they are likely to **learn interesting things** from TV (20%) as from computers (26%), are entertained "most of the time" by TV (54%) and computers (50%), and are just killing time "most of the time" with TV (16%) and computers (10%).

Kids AND Media

CHILDREN WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME WITH MEDIA ARE THE LEAST CONTENTED.

OVERALL, MOST KIDS REPORT THAT THEY HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS,

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THEN & NOW:

Percent of sixth graders who said they learned a lot "most of the time" they watched TV. in 1970: 38% [10]

Percent of sixth graders who said they learned interesting things "most of the time" they watched TV. in 1999: 29%

Nevertheless, the study results do indicate that those children who use the most media tend to be the least contented. "High" media users (those who spend more than ten and a half hours a day using media; about 16% of all kids 8 and older) score significantly lower on the contentedness index than do other kids, averaging 17.5 compared to 18.6 for other kids. Statistically, this is a highly significant difference. Indeed, further analysis found that even when controlling for factors such as income of the community in which the child attends school, race, age, and family composition, indicators of discontent such as not getting along with parents, unhappiness at school and getting into trouble a lot are strongly associated with high media use.

In addition, kids with lower grades spend significantly more time with TV, movies, videos, CDs and tapes (1:07 more a day), and significantly less time reading (12 minutes less); conversely, those children who report mostly A's and B's spend more time reading and less time with most other media.

It should be stressed that no causality can be inferred from these data. We cannot say, for example, whether TV causes kids to get into trouble, whether getting into trouble leads to watching more TV, or whether something else entirely leads to watching more TV and getting into trouble.

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Kids AND Media

CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN OR GO TO SCHOOL IN LOWER INCOME COMMUNITIES SPEND MORE TIME WITH MOST TYPES OF MEDIA THAN KIDS IN WEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS, BUT ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY TO USE COMPUTERS.

CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN OR GO TO SCHOOL IN POORER NEIGHBORHOODS

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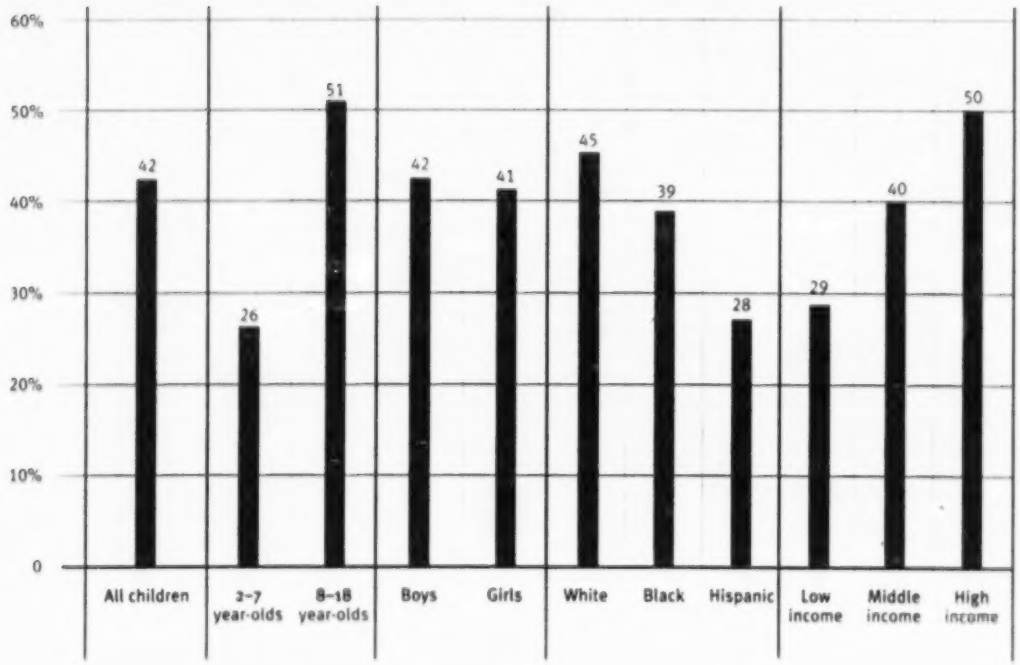
Computer Use

In a typical day, the percent of children who use a computer...



Income categories are based on the median income of the zip code in which a child lives (among 2–7 year-olds) or attends school (among 8–18 year-olds), and represent the following ranges: "Low income," less than $25,000; "Middle income," $25,000 to $39,999; "High income," $40,000 or more."

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

HOWEVER, CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN OR GO TO SCHOOL IN HIGHER INCOME COMMUNITIES ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO USE COMPUTERS THAN CHILDREN IN LOWER INCOME AREAS: less than a third (29%) of kids from lower income communities use a computer on a typical day, compared to half (50%) of kids from higher income neighborhoods.

Kids who live in or go to school in lower income neighborhoods are much less likely to have a computer anywhere in the home. About half (49%) of kids in lower income communities have a computer in the home, and about a quarter (23%) have Internet access. By contrast, 81% of kids in higher income neighborhoods have a computer at home, and more than half (58%) have Internet access.

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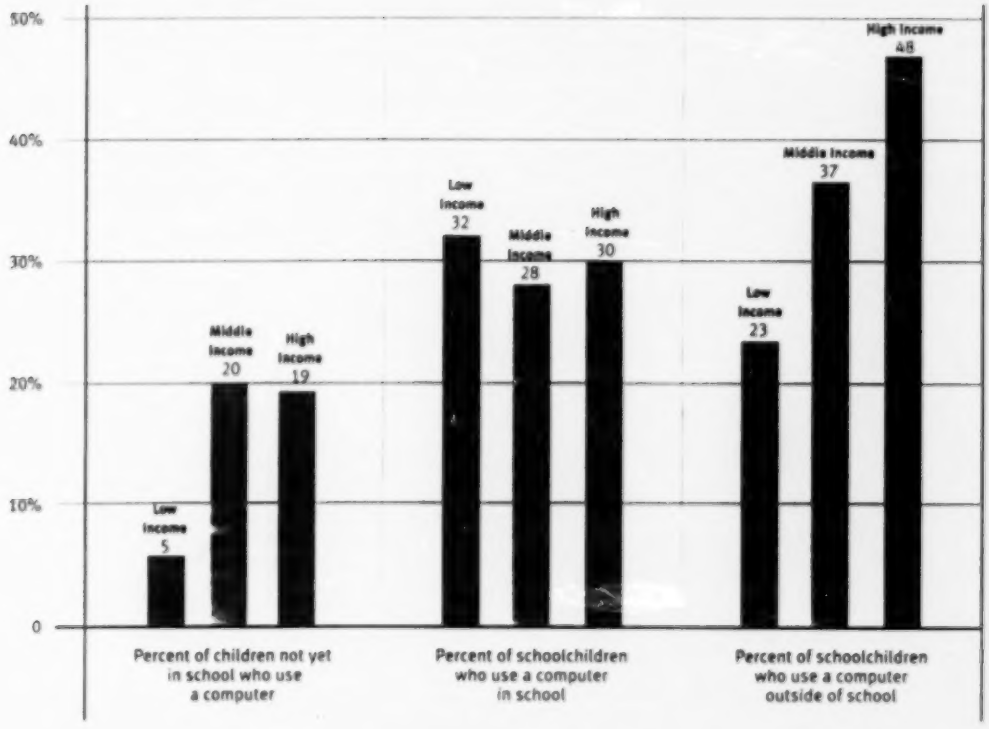
Computer Use

The impact of school on income differentials in computer use. In a typical day...



Income categories are based on the median income of the zip code in which a child lives (among 2–7 year-olds) or attends school (among 8–18 year olds), and represent the following ranges: "Low income," less than $25,000; "Middle income," $25,000 to $39,999; "High income," $40,000 or more.

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

SCHOOLS ARE HELPING TO EQUALIZE ACCESS TO COMPUTERS. Children from lower income neighborhoods are just as likely as those from higher income communities to have used a computer in school the day before (32% v. 30%). By contrast, children in upper income communities are more than twice as likely as children in poorer areas to have used a computer outside of school (48% v. 23%).

This income gap is even more pronounced among younger kids: among kids who aren't in school yet, just 5% of those from lower income neighborhoods use a computer on a typical day, compared to 19% of those from wealthier communities.

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Kids AND Media

BLACK AND HISPANIC CHILDREN SPEND SIGNIFICANTLY MORE TIME USING MEDIA — ESPECIALLY TELEVISION — THAN WHITE CHILDREN.

ON AVERAGE, CHILDREN FROM MINORITY GROUPS SPEND ALMOST

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Much of the discrepancy in media use between kids of different races is a result of time spent watching TV. Black (3:56) and Hispanic (3:13) kids spend more time watching TV than White kids (2:22). Black (30%) and Hispanic (22%) children are both more likely than White (12%) children to spend more than five hours a day watching TV. Black (69%) and Hispanic (60%) children are more likely than White (48%) children to have a TV in their bedroom.

Black children are also more likely than White children to live in homes where the TV is often on. Fifty-six percent of Black children, 42% of Hispanic children and 39% of White children live in a home where the TV is on "most of the time." They are also more likely to live in homes where the TV is usually on during meals (76% of Black children v. 63% of Hispanic and 51% of White children).

Black (:25) and Hispanic (:24) kids also spend more time on average with video games than White kids (:17). Sixteen percent of Black and Hispanic kids play video games for more than an hour a day (11% of White kids do).

Overall, based on the measures available to us in this study, socio-economic status does not appear to account for the discrepancies in the total amount of time spent with media between White and minority kids.

At every income level (based on the average income for the community in which the child lives or goes to school), White children spend substantially less time with TV and with media overall than do either Black or Hispanic children.

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BLACK AND HISPANIC CHILDREN HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS ACCESS TO COMPUTERS THAN WHITE CHILDREN, BUT FIND A WAY TO SPEND ABOUT AS MUCH TIME ON COMPUTERS AS WHITE KIDS ANYWAY.

LARGELY DUE TO INCOME DIFFERENCES, CHILDREN FROM

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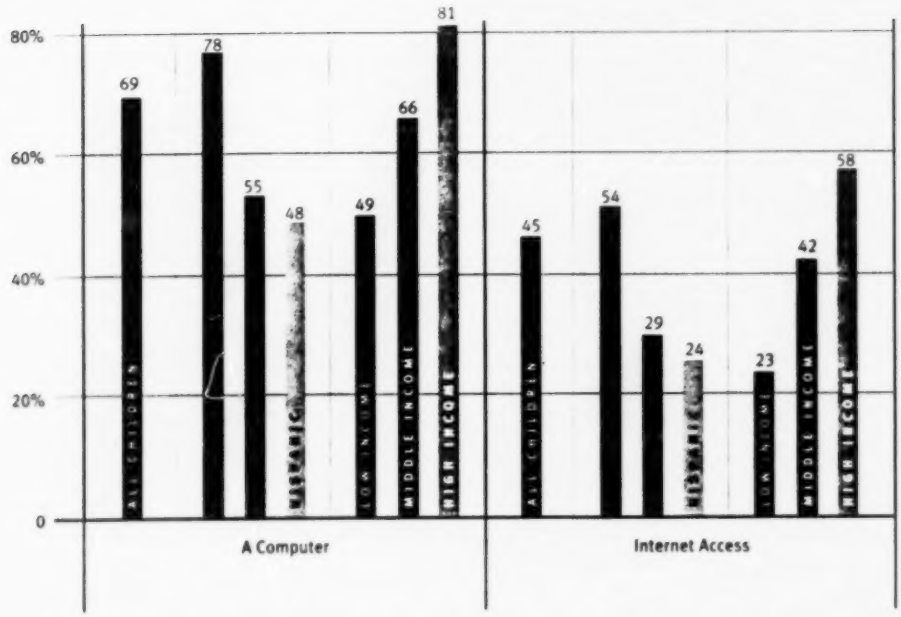
Computers in the Home

Percent of children who live in homes with...



Income categories are based on the median income of the zip code in which a child lives (among 2-7 year-olds) or attends school (among 8-18 year-olds), and represent the following ranges: "Low Income," less than $25,000; "Middle Income," $25,000 to $39,999; "High Income," $40,000 or more.

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

WHITE CHILDREN ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A COMPUTER IN THE HOME (78%) THAN BLACK (55%) OR HISPANIC (48%) CHILDREN. White children are also far more likely to have Internet access in the home (54%) than Black (29%) or Hispanic (24%) children. These differences are significantly affected by income: for example, 67% of Black children who live in or go to school in upper-income communities have a computer at home, and 37% have Internet access, compared to 46% of Black children from lower-income areas who have computers at home and 17% who have Internet access.

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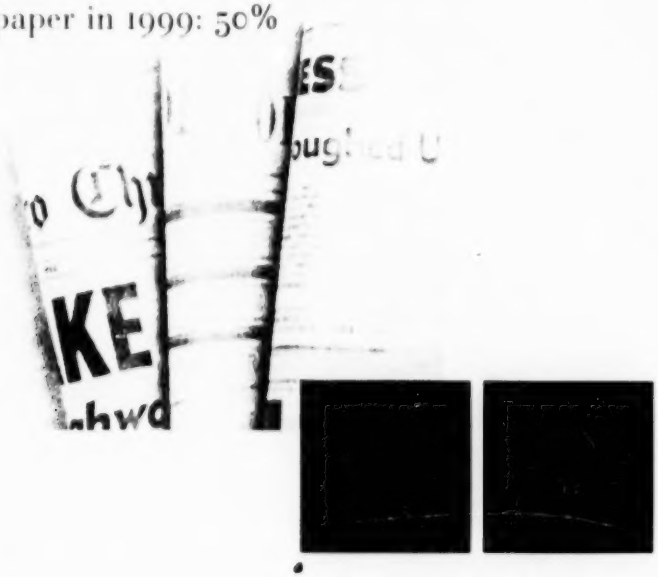
THEN & NOW:

Percent of tenth graders who read a newspaper every day in 1970: 47% [12]

In a typical day, percent of tenth graders who read a newspaper in 1999: 50%



Yet despite this difference in access, Black and Hispanic children average approximately the same amount of time on computers as White kids do (:35 for White and Black kids, :29 for Hispanics). Among those children who use a computer, Hispanic children spend an average of one hour and 49 minutes a day at the keyboard; Black kids spend an average of one hour and 34 minutes a day, and White kids spend an average of one hour and 20 minutes a day.

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In an average day, 45% of White kids, 39% of Black kids and 28% of Hispanic kids will use a computer.

Racial disparities in computer use among 2–7 year-olds who are not yet in school are pronounced, with White youngsters about twice as likely as Black or Hispanic kids to use a computer. One out of every five (20%) White preschoolers uses a computer on a typical day, compared to one in ten (9%) Black or Hispanic (11%) kids.

However, this disparity disappears when it comes to how likely kids are to use a computer in school. In a typical school day, 37% of Black schoolchildren, 29% of Hispanic, and 28% of White kids use a computer in school.

Kids and Media

BOYS AND GIRLS SPEND ROUGHLY THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME EACH DAY USING MEDIA, BUT GIRLS LISTEN TO MORE MUSIC AND BOYS WATCH MORE TV AND PLAY MORE VIDEO GAMES.

BOYS SPEND AN AVERAGE OF 18 MINUTES MORE EACH DAY

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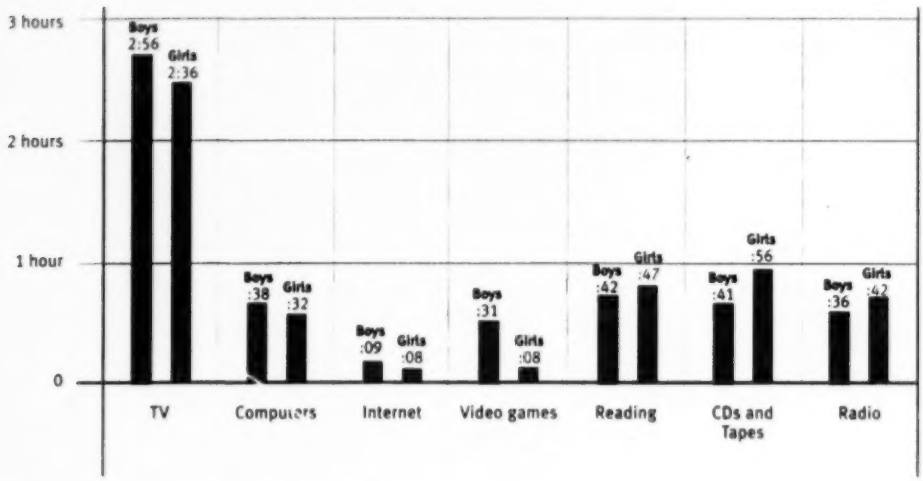
Media Use

Average amount of time boys and girls spend with the following media...



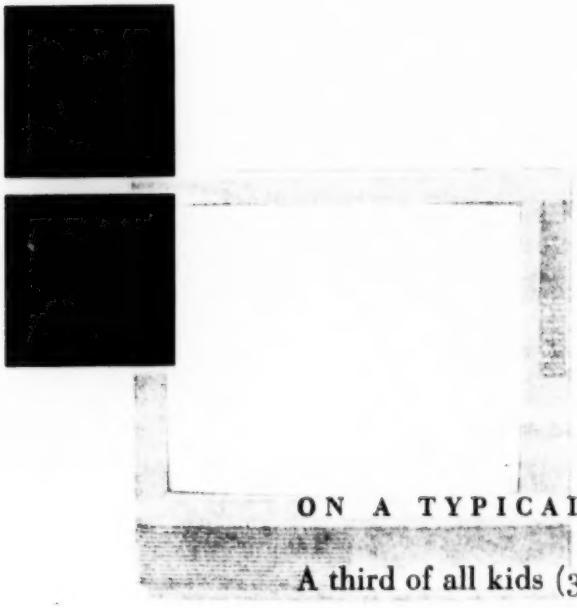
*Times are presented in **hours : minutes***

Source: Kids and Media at the New Millennium, Kaiser Family Foundation, November 1999

BOYS SPEND MUCH MORE TIME PLAYING VIDEO GAMES THAN DO GIRLS. On average, boys spend a little more than half an hour a day playing video games (:31), while girls average just eight minutes a day.

The video game gender gap starts young: 25% of little boys (2–7) play video games, compared to just 7% of girls.

Among 8–18 year-olds, 55% of boys and 23% of girls play video games on a typical day. **Nearly one out of every five boys (17%) in this age group spends more than an hour a day playing video games, compared to just 4% of girls.**



ON A TYPICAL DAY:

A third of all kids (34%) will watch a TV sitcom

Six percent of all kids will watch a TV news show

Boys watch TV for about 20 minutes more each day than do girls (2:56 v. 2:36). Boys are slightly more likely (56%) to have a TV in their bedroom than are girls (50%). **Boys and girls average the same amount of time reading for pleasure every day.**

Girls spend more time listening to music. Girls average about 20 minutes more a day than guys listening to CDs, tapes and the radio (1:38 v. 1:17).

There are significant differences between boys and girls in terms of the genres of media they like to use; these differences generally fit with existing gender stereotypes.

Of those kids who watch TV, boys watch more **sports** (19% v. 5%).

Of those who play video games, boys are more likely than girls to play **action or combat games** (46% v. 30%) or sports and competition games (44% v. 33%).

Of those 7th–12th graders who read magazines, girls are much more likely than boys to read **"teen" magazines** (73% v. 4%) while boys are much more likely than girls to read sports magazines (46% v. 7%).

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Kids and Media

BOYS SPEND A LITTLE MORE TIME THAN GIRLS DO WITH COMPUTERS, MOSTLY PLAYING GAMES.

IN A TYPICAL DAY, BOYS AND GIRLS ARE EQUALLY LIKELY TO USE

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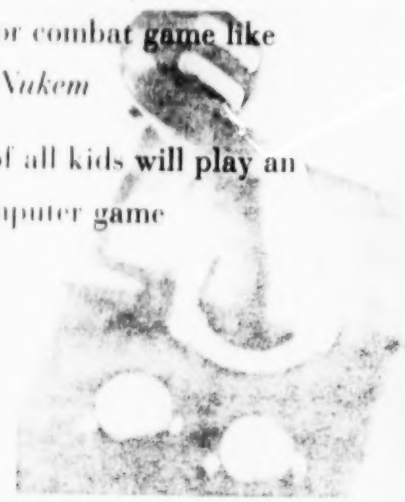
ON A TYPICAL DAY:

One out of every four boys (24%) will play an action or combat game like *Doom* or *Duke Nukem*

Seven percent of all kids will play an educational computer game



However, among kids who are 8 and older, boys average about 10 minutes more a day using computers than girls do. **Looking only at those kids who use a computer in a typical day, boys average almost 20 minutes more each day at the keyboard than girls.** Almost all of this gender gap in computer use is due to the fact that boys spend more time playing computer games than girls do; when it comes to the amount of time spent using computers for school or job-related tasks, the gender gap disappears.

Among children 8 and older, on a typical day 36% of boys play computer games, compared to 28% of girls, and boys who play do so for an average of 16 minutes more a day than girls (:46 v. :30). Across all ages, boys are more likely than girls to spend an hour or more using computer games (8% of boys v. 4% of girls).

Boys who play computer games are more than three times as likely to play action or combat games than are girls who play computer games (27% v. 8%). They are also more likely than girls to play sports or competition games (23% v. 9%) and to play simulation or strategic planning games (14% v. 5%). Girls are more likely to play classic games like *Solitaire* or *Word Grid* (29% of girls who play computer games v. 19% of boys).

Of those who visited Web sites, girls are more likely to visit **entertainment sites** (64% v. 44%), while boys are more likely to visit sports (33% v. 12%) or gaming sites (32% v. 13%).

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Kids AND Media

WHETHER KIDS LIVE IN RURAL OR URBAN AREAS MAKES VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN HOW MUCH OR WHAT KINDS OF MEDIA THEY USE.

WHETHER A CHILD LIVES IN THE CITY OR IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

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When it comes to what types of media rural kids versus city kids choose, there are very few differences. Kids over 12 watch the same genres of TV, are equally likely to play a computer or video game such as *Doom*, and, for the most part, listen to the same types of music. Rural kids listen to Rap or Hip Hop almost as much as urban kids (on any given day, 42% of 12–18 year-olds in rural areas listen to Rap or Hip Hop, compared to 48% of city kids). One musical difference is that more rural kids listen to country music on the radio than kids in the city (17% v. 9%).

Even when it comes to **new media,** there are very few differences based on whether a kids grows up in the city or in a rural area. Rural and urban kids are about equally likely to have a computer in their home (63% rural, 66% urban) and to have Internet access (39% rural v. 41% urban). As a result, urban and rural kids are just as likely to use computers or go on the Internet, and they spend roughly the same amount of time doing so. (On a typical day, 39% of urban and rural kids will use a computer; 15% of urban and 18% of rural kids will go online.)

On the other hand, **kids who live in the suburbs** tend to use less media overall (5:19) but are more computer-oriented than either city kids or kids who live in rural areas. Nearly three out of four kids in the suburbs (74%) have a computer at home (63% rural, 66% urban), and more than half (51%) have Internet access at home (39% rural, 41% urban).

Kids AND Media

KIDS IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES WATCH MORE TV THAN THOSE IN TWO-PARENT HOMES.

KIDS IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A TV

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FOOTNOTES

1. Nielsen Media Research. (1998). 1998 report on television. New York: Author, p. 15.

2. One in four (26%) 2–4 year-olds has a TV in their bedroom, as do more than a third (39%) of 5–7 year-olds.

3. Time spent in the same room while a parent watches TV is not included in the 3:34 estimate of total media use for 2–7 year-olds.

4. Lyle, J., & Hoffman, H. (1972). Children's use of television and other media. In E.A. Rubinstein, G.A. Comstock, & J.P. Murray (Eds.). Television and social behavior (Vol. 4, pp. 129–256). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 140.

5. Nielsen Media Research, p. 15.

6. Week-long averages are based on mean times with each medium, separating out weekday and weekend reports. Weekday averages were multiplied by five, and weekend averages by two, to compile an accurate estimate of a typical week.

7. The "reading for pleasure" total includes time spent reading or being read to by an adult, and it excludes time spent reading in school or for homework.

8. "High" TV users are defined as those who watch more than five hours a day; "low" users are those who watch for an hour or less a day.

9. During the in-home survey with parents of children 2–7, children were asked about their "favorite" media, using picture cards.

10. Lyle & Hoffman, p. 176.

11. Because it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate estimates of household income from school-aged youth, this study relies instead on federal estimates of median household income in the zip code of each participating school (for the school-based sample) or of each participating household (for the in-home sample). This is an imprecise measure of income: some students from higher income households undoubtedly attend schools located in low-income zip codes (and vice versa); similarly, some high-income households may be located in low-income zip codes (and vice versa). Therefore, this measure should be seen as providing only a rough estimate of possible variations in media use based on income. This measure did correlate strongly with parent education, which we have available for each child.

12. Lyle & Hoffman, p. 159.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a nationally representative sample of 3,155 children ages 2–18, including oversamples of African-American and Hispanic children. The media included in the study are television, computers, movies, videos, video games, books, magazines, newspapers, radio, and CDs and tapes. The study was designed by Kaiser Family Foundation staff in consultation with Stanford University Professor Donald F. Roberts and Harris Interactive, Inc., and the data were collected by Harris Interactive. The results were analyzed and this report was prepared by Foundation staff and Professor Roberts.

The sample includes 2,065 students in grades 3–12 (who completed self-administered written questionnaires in the classroom about their media use the previous day) and 1,090 children ages 2–7 (whose parents or caregivers participated in an hour-long in-home survey about the child's media use the previous day). In addition, week-long media use diaries were collected for 621 of these children (487 completed by 3rd–12th graders, and 134 completed by parents of 2–7 year-olds).

The margin of error for the combined sample of children 2–18 is ±3%; for the in-school sample of 3rd–12th graders it is ±3%; and for the in-home sample of 2–7 year-olds it is ±5%.

The findings reported on in this summary are based on the nationally representative sample, except where noted; the diaries were used primarily for verification, to examine media use patterns among individual children over the course of a week, and to collect additional information about media genres.

A more detailed description of methodology can be found in the full report on which this summary is based, and in Appendix A.

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